

# MY DEAR THEOPHILUS

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## NEWS FROM AROUND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

While distanced by Covid, Christians around the world join together in prayer for unity. The ecumenical Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is taking place against a backdrop of global lockdowns and restrictions on movement.



Dear Parish Family:

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

This is an exciting time to be a Christian! This period is almost like being a Christian during the early Church when a small, crazy, band of people you would never think would go together, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, men and women, black and white and every hue in between, free and slave, proclaimed the impossible: Jesus who was crucified had risen from the dead!

In society today, there are so many who are unchurched. The mission field is ripe. In fact, Gallup reported this week that now only 47% of Americans belong to any church. That is down from 70% in the mid-1990s and 50% in 2019.

Although most Americans will claim that they believe in God, the god that they believe in is not the God of the Scripture. Rather, it is moralistic therapeutic deism. People believe that there is a God and all he wants for us is to be happy and nice. You do not need God unless anything infringes on one of those two goals. As long as you are pursuing happiness and niceness, you are going to go to heaven. Other than that, you do not really need God.

The philosophy of moralistic therapeutic deism evolved into this sort of “believe-in-yourself-ism.” The message became: You are all you need. You do not need God for anything else as long as you are happy and nice. So people put God on the shelf deciding that we do not really need God. We just need to believe in ourselves, to invent who we are and what we want to do, and we need to just pursue that. Jen Oshan, *Why Moralistic Therapeutic Deism Is a Dead End*, July 10, 2020; see also Christian Smith & Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (2005). It is America’s new religion, and you do not need a community or worship to engage in it. It is an anemic, watered-down version of religion, which requires very little if anything from its adherents.

The God of Scripture, the Triune God, the Father in whom we live move and have our being, Jesus of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, is so much more. It is the reality of humanity’s pursuit of its own desires and ends to be happy while rejecting the very basis of its existence, and it is the love story of God’s pursuit of His beloved to the point of giving his all on the cross where evil and its human accomplices do their worst to innocence and love.

Remember the beginning of John’s Gospel? In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and through him all things were made. John’s gospel starts with creation, recalling Genesis and the act of creation. Genesis tells us that God created the universe from nothing, and that all of creation was good. But through Adam and Eve, who rejected God, sin entered the world. Adam is the failed gardener of Eden.

Jesus is the New Adam. Just as sin and death entered the world through one man, the failed gardener of Eden, now life flows from the resurrected Jesus: Jesus is the first born of all the new creation. Jesus is the gardener of the new garden, and the resurrection of Jesus is the reaffirmation that God created all things and saw that it was good. It is God’s good creation, and we are living in the wake of the resurrection, and are part of that good creation.

The impossible has happened; the greatest of all of the miracles, Jesus has risen from the dead never to die again, he has destroyed sin and death and he lives! That is Good News that needs to be proclaimed and that humanity longs to hear.

Mary, the apostle to the disciples, went and announced to them, “I have seen the Lord! I have seen the Lord!” and she told them what Jesus said to her. She ran told them the reality of what happened: Jesus’ resurrection is a reality.

The resurrection is not an abstract idea; the resurrection is not wishful thinking; the resurrection is not a warm and fuzzy feeling—the resurrection is the reality that Mary Magdalene and the apostles encountered in an living and loving way—they encountered the Risen Jesus who transformed their very existence by the forgiveness of sins and new life in him—not a temporary transformation, but one that is as eternal as the God who created the universe. It is accomplished.

You and I know that the impossible is God’s specialty. God takes what is dead and makes it pulse with life. God reshapes what is broken, mends what is torn, fixes shattered dreams, and infuses hope into despair. God takes shame, washes it clean, and replaces it with His holiness. God casts away our sin-soaked lives, giving us new starts and fresh beginnings. With God, darkness becomes light, strangers become family, runaways become redeemed, and death becomes life.

It is a reality that Mary Magdalene told the disciples about that you and I are here talking about more than 2000 years after it occurred that morning in the garden when the power of God was made known to humanity, and the stone was rolled away and Jesus walked out of the tomb, not just a resuscitated body, but as a new creation, the creation as God the Father intended it.

Jesus is here to make us a new creation too—he starts by tilling the soil of our lives. He has already turned things upside down by his own glorious

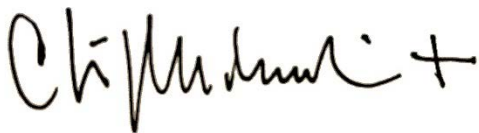
resurrection, and now he is about the business of turning our lives upside down, of tilling our soil.

Today we profess faith in a God who believes in the goodness of soil and the possibility of fresh growth. We welcome Jesus as Lord who speaks of growing our lives like branches with the plentiful fruit of love for all. No matter how dry our soil or seemingly barren our land, the resurrected Jesus points to a God who makes all things new—this old world, this old worldwide church, and our old lives. Like Mary, Jesus calls you by name, welcomes you, speaks goodness over you, and sends you out into the world to be the good news. Bear fruit. Allow God to work in you to make your life flourish. Carry God’s kindness and love with you in all places knowing that in this garden when you plant love, more love grows. And the Kingdom of God, like that green shot that springs forth from the cracks in the sidewalk, cannot be stopped, and will spread until it takes over everything.

If we give ourselves to the Way of this gardener Jesus, who knows what might grow and where it will grow. Join Jesus in the garden!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Your servant in Christ,



The Rev. Chester J. Makowski, Rector



## **G.R.A.C.E. PREGNANCY OUTREACH 2021 BANQUET:**

### **BORN FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS**



Our guest speaker will be Jeri Lynn Scott of New Braunfels who will share her story of second chances and overcoming obstacles through God's love and redemption. Dinner will be provided by Texas Traditions Catering!

#### **Date And Time**

Thu, April 15, 2021  
5:30 PM – 8:00 PM CDT

#### **Location**

Polk County Commerce Center  
1017 U.S. 59 Loop North  
Livingston, TX 77351

**Call to Register: 936-327-8440 or use this link:**  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/grace-pregnancy-outreach-2021-banquet-born-for-such-a-time-as-this-tickets-139943957143>



Christ tells us: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Mt. 6:21. Please remember the Parish for your annual pledge. This Parish is tremendously generous, but 2020 saw a marked downturn in giving since we were not meeting to worship together and were live-streaming our worship services.

**2021 St. Luke's Episcopal Church Pledge Card**  
In appreciation for God's blessings I/we pledge the following:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per week    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per year

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_



Please make all checks payable to St. Luke's Episcopal Church.  
Please return by placing in the collection plate by January 17, 2021  
Amazing things can happen when you offer your talents,  
skills, experience, and financial support!



***FEATURED HOLY PERSON OF  
THE MONTH  
CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, BISHOP &  
THEOLOGIAN  
March 18  
By James Kiefer***

Cyril was born in Jerusalem around 315, and became bishop of that city in about 349. The years between the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381) were troubled years, in which the Church, having committed itself at Nicaea, over the strenuous protests of the Arians, to the proposition that the Son is "one in being" (homo-ousios) with the Father, began to backtrack and consider whether there was some other formula that would adequately express the Lordship of Christ but not be "divisive." Experience with other ways of stating what

Christians believed about the Son and his relation to the Father finally led the Church to conclude that the Nicene formulation was the only way of safeguarding the doctrine that Thomas spoke truly (John 20:28) when he said to Jesus, "My Lord and My God!" But this was not obvious from the beginning, and Cyril was among those who looked for a way of expressing the doctrine that would be acceptable to all parties. As a result, he was exiled from his bishopric three times, for a total of sixteen years, once by the Athanasians and twice by the Arians. He eventually came to the conclusion, as did most other Christians of the time, that there was no alternative to the Nicene formula, and in 381 he attended the Council of Constantinople and voted for that position.

Cyril is author of the Catecheses, or Catechetical Lectures on the Christian Faith. These consist of an introductory lecture, then eighteen lectures on the Christian Faith to be delivered during Lent to those about to be baptized at Easter, and then five lectures on the Sacraments to be delivered after Easter to the newly baptized. These have been translated into English (F L Cross, 1951), and are the oldest such lectures surviving. (It is thought that they were used over and over by Cyril and his successors, and that they may have undergone some revision in the process.)

Every year, thousands of Christian pilgrims came to Jerusalem, especially for Holy Week. It is probably Cyril who instituted the liturgical forms for that week as they were observed in Jerusalem at the pilgrimage sites, were spread to other churches by returning pilgrims, and have come down to us today, with the procession with palms on Palm Sunday, and the services for the following days, culminating in the celebration of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. We have a detailed account of Holy Week observances in Jerusalem in the fourth century, thanks to a Spanish nun named Egeria who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and kept a journal which is a historian's delight.

## **St. Vincent's House Helps Galveston Recover from Winter Storm Uri**

Galveston residents were hit hard by Winter Storm Uri. In response, St. Vincent's House coordinated a mass multi-agency "pop-up" recovery & distribution event on Friday, March 5. The collaborating organizations were able to provide food, water, cleaning and hygiene supplies, and clothing. The Lighthouse Charity Team cooked and served over 1600



hot meals. Cars lined up for 20 blocks, and 75 volunteers served 349 households and 1,456 people.



*Photo taken by Stuart Villanueva with the Galveston Daily News.*



### ***HOSPITAL VISITS***

Given COVID-19, visitations are restricted by hospitals. Nevertheless, if you know of anyone who needs a home visit because they cannot get to Church, please call the Parish Office, or let Fr. Makowski know. We will see if the hospital will allow Fr. Makowski to call on them. If you have a pastoral emergency, please call Fr. Makowski at 713.299.7675.

### ***THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER***

Praying is something that we all can do, young and old, rich and poor, tall and short. Please pray for everyone in our Parish, those who have asked you to pray for them and especially those who have no one to pray for them.





***PLEASE BRING PORK & BEANS  
FOR MANNAFEST***

***SHOP AT THE OASIS THE  
HOME OF THE BEST BARGAINS  
IN POLK COUNTY***



St. Luke's Episcopal Church

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LIVINGSTON, TEXAS 77351  
CHURCH OFFICE: 936.327.8467  
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## NOTICE

**PURSUANT TO SECTION 30.07, PENAL CODE (TRESPASS BY LICENSE HOLDER WITH AN OPENLY CARRIED HANDGUN),** A PERSON LICENSED UNDER SUBCHAPTER H, CHAPTER 411, GOVERNMENT CODE (HANDGUN LICENSING LAW), MAY NOT ENTER THIS PROPERTY WITH A HANDGUN THAT IS CARRIED OPENLY.

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**CONFORME A LA SECCIÓN 30.07, DEL CÓDIGO PENAL (TRASPASE POR PORTADOR DE LICENCIA PARA EL LIBRE PORTE DE ARMAS DE FUEGO),** PERSONAS CON LICENCIA BAJO AUTORIDAD DEL SUBCAPÍTULO H, CAPÍTULO 411, DEL CÓDIGO DE GOBIERNO (LEY REGULADORA DE ARMAS DE FUEGO), NO DEBERÁ ENTRAR A ESTA PROPIEDAD CON UN ARMA DE FUEGO A LIBRE PORTE.

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**PURSUANT TO SECTION 30.06, PENAL CODE (TRESPASS BY LICENSE HOLDER WITH A CONCEALED HANDGUN),** A PERSON LICENSED UNDER SUBCHAPTER H, CHAPTER 411, GOVERNMENT CODE (HANDGUN LICENSING LAW), MAY NOT ENTER THIS PROPERTY WITH A CONCEALED HANDGUN.

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**CONFORME A LA SECCIÓN 30.06, DEL CÓDIGO PENAL (TRASPASE POR PORTADOR DE LICENCIA CON UN ARMA DE FUEGO OCULTO),** PERSONAS CON LICENCIA BAJO AUTORIDAD DEL SUBCAPÍTULO H, CAPÍTULO 411, DEL CÓDIGO DE GOBIERNO (LEY REGULADORA DE ARMAS DE FUEGO), NO DEBERÁ ENTRAR A ESTA PROPIEDAD PORTANDO UN ARMA DE FUEGO OCULTO.